

fectness) in order to have our souls soft and tender and humble about what passes around. If we do not see this, we shall not be able to maintain the sense of Christ's love. And further, unless by the power of the Spirit we get away from circumstances, so as to see the Church, and the saints individually, as Christ sees them, instead of seeking to nourish and cherish them as Christ does, we shall be disappointed. This often makes us angry; it should not, but it does. We shall either lower our standard, and be content with conformity to the world in the saints, or become discontented and judicial, angry and bitter against them, the flesh being disappointed and vexed. Faith assumes the acceptance of the saints in Christ, while it seeks in the exercise of godly and gracious discipline that they should be maintained and bloom in the fragrance of Christ's grace. "As the valleys are they spread forth, as the trees of lign-aloes which Jehovah has planted, and as cedar-trees beside the waters!" What a most blessed picture! And could we be happy in seeing them stunted, dishonouring the Lord? The glory of Christ is concerned; He gets His character from us. Paul says to the saints at Corinth, not "ye ought to be," but, "*ye are* the epistle of Christ, written with the Spirit of the living God." No, I must grieve when I find in them that which is contrary to their beauty in Christ. They are "as trees of lign-aloes, and as cedar-trees." It is not merely that God has not seen iniquity in them—He has seen beauty. Oh! beloved, our souls need to see the Church, and the saints individually, thus in God's vision, with our eyes open, in the Spirit; otherwise we shall not get into the power of God's thoughts. We do not want "the vision of the Almighty" in order to see that a saint is a saint; neither do we want "open eyes" to dis-